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Fondata nel 1927

AFRICA/CONGO DR - The inhabitants of the villages where a military offensive against the guerrillas is planned is caught between two fires

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - "The population is trying to lead a normal life but attentive to what is happening because a new wave of violence is always feared" say to Fides Agency Church sources from Goma, the capital of North Kivu, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo where the Congolese army and UN troops are waging an offensive against the guerrillas of the M23.
The government of Kinshasa accuses Rwanda of supporting the M23 and of having sent troops to its support. The Congolese authorities also claim that Rwandan militants shot some artillery against Goma in past weeks. Rwanda in turn accuses the DRC of having hit its territory, killing at least one person. Kigali has therefore deployed troops on the border with Congo, increasing the tension.
"Last week several people were concerned after reading the news about the concentration of Rwandan troops on the border with Congo, so much so some did not work for the fear of bombing. But now after the admonition of the UN Secretary General to Rwanda, the population is a bit serene" our sources say .
While the Congolese army, backed by the troops of the UN is preparing to launch a new offensive against the M23 in the area of Kikumba (about thirty km from Goma), the population of the villages of the area is trapped between the two contenders. "We talked to a person in a village parish in the area who told us that the inhabitants cannot leave from there because the road is blocked" our sources say.
The UN special envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mary Robinson went to Goma where she confirmed that the M23 must cease violence and lay down their arms, as requested by the Security Council of the United Nations.
"The citizens of Goma rejoiced a little to what Ms. Robinson said, but are waiting for concrete facts" say our sources. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 03/09/2013)

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